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THE

DREAMERS

EDWARD S. VAN ZILE



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THE
DREAMERS
AND OTHER POEMS

Sims
EDWARD S. VAN ZILE

F. TENNYSON NEELY,
114 Fifth Ave. — NEW YORK.
96 Queen St. — LONDON.

17'11



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To
WILLIAM H. BULKELEY
this little
Bundle of Rhymes
is
Affectionately Dedicated
by
The Author

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“WE ARE SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON.”

— The Tempest.

THE DREAMERS

N the dawn of the day of ages,
In the youth of a wondrous race,
'Twas the dreamer who saw the mar-
vel,
'Twas the dreamer who knew God's face.

On the mountains and in the valleys,
By the banks of the crystal stream,
He wandered whose eyes grew heavy
With the grandeur of his dream.

The seer whose grave none knoweth,
The leader who rent the sea,
The lover of men who, smiling,
Walked safe on Galilee —

All dreamed their dreams and whispered
To the weary and worn and sad
Of a vision that passeth knowledge.
They said to the world: "Be glad!"

"Be glad for the words we utter,
Be glad for the dreams we dream;
Be glad, for the shadows fleeing,
Shall let God's sunlight beam."

But the dreams and the dreamers vanish,
The world with its cares grows old;
The night, with the stars that gem it,
Is passing fair, but cold.

What light in the heavens shining
Shall the eye of the dreamer see?
Was the glory of old a phantom,
The wraith of a mockery?

Oh, man, with your soul that crieth
In gloom for a guiding gleam,
To you are the voices speaking
Of those who dream their dream.

If their vision be false and fleeting,
If its glory delude their sight —
Ah, well, 'tis a dream shall brighten
The long, dark hours of night.

MIDNIGHT

I

 WONDER if midnight bells can know
Who counteth their solemn beats,
While the shadows and moonbeams, to
and fro,
Play tag through the city's streets.
One — two — 'tis the step of Time,
Three — four — with its threatening tread ;
Five — six — and a child is born ;
Seven — eight — and a man is dead ;
Nine — ten — and a drunkard sings ;
Eleven — twelve — and a woman weeps ;
And some are merry and some are sad —
But God in wisdom his secret keeps.

II

I wonder if spirits of men returned
Surround the bell in the ghostly tower,
And laugh and weep at the world's weird ways,
While the tongue so lazily tolls the hour.
I wonder if demons and angels there
On the city of sorrow and sin look down,
While time and eternity call to us
From the throbbing steeple above the town.
For the hour has come and the hour has gone
For aye to the watcher and him who sleeps ;
And, waking or dreaming, we ask in vain —
For God in mercy his secret keeps.

SYMPATHY

I

THE echo of a wondrous song
Arose from out the heart o' me;
I writ it down, as with a kiss,
It seemed a sacred part o' me.

II

And far afield the verses flew,
To men who'd never heard o' me;
And long I waited, but the world
Sent back no kindly word to me.

III

Ten thousand may have felt the truth,
The music in the soul of it;
But far beyond my ken it goes—
I'll never know the goal of it.

IV

And yet I read it to you here
And, eye to eye, we meet in it;
And sweeter grows, because of you,
Whatever may be sweet in it.

V

And so, though God approve my song,
He's very far away from me;
But to my soul, in loneliness,
Is sweet the word you say to me.

THE UNKNOWN SEA

I

ONG ere Columbus sailed the unknown
sea,

Upon the sands a lonely dreamer lay,
And, gazing westward, sought to pierce the void
Beyond the sky-line's unresponsive gray.

II

There at his feet the ocean, throbbing, strove
To tell its secret to the weary soul,
But knowing not the language of the sea
He heard no message in the billows' roll.

III

Beyond the mist, where sky and ocean met,
Reposed the waiting islands of the west,
But naught the dreamer learned save that his
heart
Grew heavy with the vainness of his quest.

IV

So are we dreamers on the strand of life,
Scanning an ocean heeding not our cry;
And, dim with tears, our straining eyes see not
The smiling islands of the bye-and-bye.

MAN'S MASTERPIECE

THROUGH countless ages on the earth
there wrought
A race called man, which strove and
hoped and dreamed;
And those there were who sang, and those who
taught,
And those who whispered of the lost redeemed.

And as they came and went they builded here.
A structure marvelous that no man planned,
A towering temple, rising white and sheer
Where sea-lapped mountains frown upon the
land.

On through its portals, ever moving, passed
The generations, adding to its store
Of all that's beautiful, until at last
To those who gazed there seemed no room
for more.

Not all in peace had this proud palace grown,
For in its shadow men had warred and died ;
And, falling there, had seen the glory flown
That, erstwhile gleaming, filled their hearts
with pride.

But ever hopeful, as the ages cried
From out the ages to the race that wrought,
They builded then anew, and, side by side,
Carved what they dreamed and writ there
what they thought.

And so on earth man through the aeons strove
To make this palace nobler to the eye,
And worthy, as the casket of his love,
To tell his glory to the bye-and-bye.

And some day lonely on a lonely earth,
The last man sleeping where his fathers sleep,
This wondrous thing that in man's soul had
birth
Shall rise in silence by the moaning deep;
A temple, made for dust-worms, of a race
That came and went, and dreamed its dream
and died;
And, crumbling there, shall fall to earth again,
The mausoleum of man's love and pride.

HEREDITY

IN the quaint and grim old stories
Hanging on my family tree —
Dried old fruit that keeps its savor
Richer for a century —

Find I warriors and lovers,
Men of Cupid, men of Mars,
Wooing, fighting — passion's victims —
Boastful of their very scars.

And, methinks, they rule my spirit
In my futile quest for bliss,
For at times I long for battle,
And at others crave a kiss.

And my moods, forever changing,
Hold my fickle soul in thrall.
Now I hear the love-lute playing,
And, anon, the battle's call.

Oh, the joy the strong man feeleth
While his sword is flashing bright,
And the foe he greeteth gladly
Falls before him in the fight !

In my veins I feel the fever
Of the ecstasy they knew
When the lust of blood was on them
And, delirious, they slew.

Then I see a smiling phantom
Gliding toward me from the gloom.
Heart of Love! How came she hither
From the prison of the tomb?

Softly on my lips her kisses
Soothe my spirit, battle-tossed,
And the fervor of the combat
In the world of love is lost.

So they haunt me — restless shadows —
While my longings change apace,
And I crave the lawless freedom
Of the elders of my race.

THE LAST PESSIMIST

HERE was once a queer, little, wizened
man,
With a burning and baleful eye,
Whose heart was sore with the hate it held
For the lights that blaze on high.

And when at even the sun went down,
And the planets in glory shone,
He would dance about in a frenzied way
And mutter and curse and groan.

One night when his soul was a fiery thing
Of hatred and discontent,
He put out a star that winked at him —
His passion had found a vent.

And night after night, as time went by,
The hour of his rapture came;
And star after star was turned as black
As the coals that follow flame.

Then darker and darker grew the sky,
And madder the weird man's mood;
He swallowed the glories that passed away
As a hungry imp his food.

Some nights his horrible fantasy
Would ruin a thousand stars;
Where once had glittered the gems of light
Gaped nothing but bald, black scars.

And ever and ever, as time went by,
His hunger for gloom increased;
He wiped the dipper from off the sky —
That night he had had a feast.

Then once when his soul was unsatisfied,
And he hated the thought of day,
This madcap man in his misery
Made ink of the milky way.

And still the sun and the moon came up,
Though dim as the ends of space,
While he swore the universe should not bear
One smile upon its face.

And ever his power increased and grew,
Till the moon became his prey,
And with one fell swoop he swamped the sun
And ended the final day.

And all men died, save the little fiend,
Who groveled in sore affright;
Then he, too, perished, and dying, cried :
“Oh, God, for a ray of light !”

AN ISLAND

'T IS a summer day, and the harbor
Is gay as the ships go by,
And I at my open window
Seem part of the sea and sky.

But not for me is the freedom
Of the wind that mocketh me,
For I am a city's prisoner,
And I long to be out to sea.

Out to sea in a scurrying ship
That shall carry me far away
To a land that lieth, I know not where,
Anear to the gates of day.

To a land where dreams are never dreams,
And the promise of Life comes true,
And we kiss the lips once pressed to ours
In days when our youth was new.

Oh, tell me, ye ships, as ye pass by,
Do ye know of the land I mean?
Where flowers die not, nor love grows cold,
The isle of the might-have-been?

Will ye pass the place in days to come,
And, tossing the waves aside,
Pester the sea near the silent land
Where the wraiths of my youth abide?

But the ships go by, and answer not,
While the spume in their pathway gleams,
And I know the island I cannot find
Lies lost in the sea of dreams.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

I

 RACE-TRACK and a graveyard
Stand almost side by side,
Where the restless ocean surges
On the beach at eventide.
And the living pass with laughter
Where the dead lie sleeping still,
Near the race-track by the ocean,
In the graveyard on the hill.

II

Do they pause to read the meaning
Of the white stones rising there,
As the tang the salt breeze carries
Fills the damp and chilling air ?
Does the quiet of the hillside,
Where the dead are resting well,
On the truant thousands linger
Like a weird and witching spell ?

III

No, they pass, like twilight visions ;
Deeper blue the ocean seems ;
And the graveyard on the hillside
Stands a place of ghostly dreams.
Toward the city, where the glow-lights
Twinkle gayly in our sight,
We, the living, eager, joyous,
Hurry onward through the night.

IV

What care we for ghastly gravestones,
Standing sentry by the sea ?
There is life and joy beyond us
Midst the city's revelry.
Let the dead lie, all forgotten,
In their dank beds far away ;
See ! the lights grow ever brighter ;
Why should phantoms bid us stay ?

V

Yet they beckoned, gruesome figures,
From the graveyard on the hill,
As the gay throng passed them, heedless,
And the night grew darker still.
Who the dead, and who the living?
Which the real, and which the dream?
Where the garish lights are glowing—
Where the white stones, ghostly, gleam?

“QUI VIVE?”

“Qui vive?” “Tis the sentry asking
Who is moving beyond his sight,
Who comes through the darkness
stealing,
Who, waking, disturbs the night.

’Tis a shadow he sees in the bushes,
’Tis the breeze as it bends the grass,
’Tis the limb of a tree a-tremble—
How slowly the long hours pass!

“Qui vive?” And no answer cometh;
But, hark! how the pine-tops moan,
While the midnight world is mocking
That sentry there — alone!

“Qui vive?” Through the ages asking
The void what is stirring there,
Man hears no sound in the darkness
Save the echo of his prayer.

A GHOST

I

 **E**VERY man a shadow walks,
Unheeded, all unseen;
Unlike, and yet so strangely like—
The tie is close between.
Mayhap in dreams the form grows clear,
And waking, wet with tears,
We feel that some sweet, chiding voice
Spake from the vanished years.

II

By every man that wraith is felt
When throbs the heavy heart,
When sorrow to the sinking soul
Bids even hope depart.
Through all life's weary, wandering way
That shadow by our side
Speaks softly to our inner self,
Rebukes our petty pride.

III

Aye, by your side that spirit seems
To tread as if in woe,
While toward the land where ages sleep
You wondering, weeping go.
You ask me what this shadow is,
This weird, wan, wrongéd twin —
The ghost of what you cannot be,
The man you might have been.

THE POET

I

~~THE~~ N an age that worships an image
That is made of the gold that
gleams,
What place is left for the poet?
What crown for the head that dreams?

II

The wand that the masters wielded,
Bewitching the souls of men,
Lies prone in the dust, unheeded,
Who'll seize that wand again?

III

In vain to the passing millions
Arises the soothing strain
From the harp of him who heareth
The echo of their pain.

IV

In vain shall the words he utters
In the ears of the throng resound;
He speaks from a clearer vision,
But they press him to the ground.

V

“For life is long,” they murmur,
“And struggle and strife shall gain
The guerdon of gold that glitters,
Of gold that shall soothe our pain.”

VI

Fools! fools! in your mad delusion,
You worry and fret and die;
And the truth that the poet speaketh
Shall live in the bye-and-bye.

VII

Let him weep in the lonely places,
Let him walk by the sea at night,
Let him gaze at the stars whose splendor
Shall glorify his sight;

VIII

And the heart of the vast creation
Shall whisper its secret there,
While the poet's soul adoreth
The truth that God lays bare.

THE OLD GUARD'S PRAYER

ON Mount McGregor's summit
The moonbeams shed their light,
Where the great warrior lies
Sleeping so well to-night.

Down in the misty valley
The tramp of men is heard,
The muffled drum is beating,
"Grant" is the whispered word.

Far in the dreamy distance
The battalions still advance,
The moonbeams show the pathway
And from the bayonets glance.

The shadowy army marches
Up the steep mountain-height;
Stern are the white, sad faces,
Scarred with the wounds of fight.

Thousands of brave old veterans,
Who fought through years of strife,
March in that midnight army
To sound of drum and fife;

Men who were brave at Shiloh,
Men who fought against Lee,
Men from the James and Potomac,
Men from the Tennessee.

Crippled are some and aged,
Their hair is white with years,
Their heads are bowed in sadness,
Their eyes are filled with tears.

With arms reversed the warriors
Silently march along;
Hushed is the martial music,
Hushed is the soldier-song.

With the quiet of the day-dawn
Unbroken by a sound,
Where Grant lies softly sleeping
They stand on sacred ground.

Their Chaplain prays to Heaven—
Bared are the gray heads then;
He prays for the soul of the hero,
And the soldiers sob “Amen.”

The sun comes up in splendor,
And the mountaintop is bright,
But that band of faithful heroes
Has vanished with the night.

HAUNTED

ONE day, alas, I lost my youth,
I know not when or how;
I only know I had it once,
And cannot find it now.

But sometimes in the winter
I feel it in the air,
And when the snowflakes kiss my face
It seems to touch me there.

Then in the spring the breezes
That wander from the South,
With warm caresses laden,
Seek youth upon my mouth.

And, oh, the summer sunbeams
That make the roses blush,
They stir my blood and linger
To bid my wan cheeks flush.

My youth? I lost it long ago,
But of this fact I boast:
It may be dead, but, surely, I
Am haunted by its ghost.

SCRAP BOOKS

I

TELL me, ye coming years,
What fate have ye for these,
The fragments of my love and life,
Astrewn between the leaves?

II

When I'm at rest forever,
My name unknown to men,
Mayhap an eye, grown dimmer,
Shall read these words again.

III

For here, 'mid tears and laughter,
And writ in woe and weal,
Upon these musty pages
A soul has set its seal.

IV

A life that love had brightened
May linger yet awhile
Between these dusty covers,
To tempt a tear or smile.

V

Mayhap the babies gathered
Around my knee to-night
Shall gently turn these pages
When I am lost to sight.

VI

Mayhap the loving message
That I have penned for thee
Shall bring our souls together,
Despite the mystery.

VII

So let the years roll onward
While on these books I place
What songs may cheer you, dear ones,
When I have run my race.

IMMORTALITY

THE PAINTER

 **S**ENEATH his brush the pigments wrought
Such wondrous tints and shapes
That e'en the birds, bewildered there,
Plucked at the artist's grapes;
And Zeuxis, pale with ecstasy,
His wild eyes all aflame,
Cried out: " 'Twill live till Time is old!"
— He left us but a name.

THE SCULPTOR

Praxiteles from stubborn stone
 Carved figures warm with life.
The marble gave its secret love
 A form beneath his knife.
And on his work the sculptor gazed,
 While to his heart there came
The hope of its eternity :
 — He left us but a name.

THE POET

A sightless minstrel, old and worn,
His tales of heroes told,
Of deeds that live from age to age
Of mighty men of old.
The glory of his day is ours,
For Homer's soul hath sought
The garb of immortality —
In deathless words he wrought!

IN MEMORIAM

F. R.

I

O him who mourns because a friend has
passed
Beyond the mystery that we call death
No word of poesy, though writ in tears,
Can be more potent than a sigh — a breath
That cannot voice his sorrow. Yet I long
To tell the love we bore him in my song.

II

To tell the love we bore him, you and I,
Who knew him in the sunshine of the day
That men call youth — ere yet the world had
sought
To show us all the peril of the way.
To-night the splendor rests on other years, —
But still we cannot see it for our tears.

WHAT HEARETH THE POET?

 UNHAPPY is the poet for he
Hears the stirring strain
Of a song that craves the singing
Making music in his brain.
But it's work, work, work!
What is he that he should ask
For the words whose wonder-working
Lures a dreamer from his task?

Is he mad that he should listen
To the harmonies that woo,
In a rhythm so seductive,
From the deeds that he must do?
For it's work, work, work!
Be the song however sweet,
If he listen he will trample
What is best beneath his feet!

Let him harken to the earth-sounds,
To the rattle and the roar
Making horrid din around him ;
— Not for him the songs that soar !
For it's work, work, work !
But the music comes again !
Can it be he hears the harmony
From souls of toiling men ?

A VISION

I

WHY comes her face to-night, so fair and
glad,
From that dim past where once it
smiled on me?
Ah, well, I thought my soul had lost a love
That erstwhile thrilled me with its ecstasy.
The years have borne their sadness and their
joy;
The world has grown so weary and so wise!
Yet comes that face to gem the midnight hour;
To tempt to folly with her azure eyes.

II

As though my youth had sent its wraith to me,
To cheer a heart grown weary with the strife,
Her face smiles at me with the love it bore
When from her kisses I drank deep of life.
Between our souls a mighty tide has rolled;
The world, mayhap the silent tomb is there;
But this I know — this one glad hour is mine;
I breathe the perfume of her golden hair!

THE BIRTH OF NEMESIS

THE scarlet flowers of daybreak
Have bloomed in the languorous
sky,
The sunbeams kiss the night-shades
That faint and shudder and fly.
Oh, her face is pale on the pillows,
Her sleep is broken with sighs;
Her lips are white from passion,
From passion that glows and dies.

Her eyes, where the shadows linger,
Are weary of love's fierce flame.
Her breast is worn with the tempest,
The ecstasy of shame.
Her hair that the sun caresses
Is tossed in a golden maze,
And the light of the morning lingers,
And dances, and gleams, and plays.

One hand on the pillow resting
Lies, slender and white and smooth,
A hand to draw men downward,
To fondle and fire and soothe.
The air is heavy with incense,
With the odors of rose and myrrh
That steal from her dead-white body
When the dream-gods bid her stir.

I bend to the cheek that wooed me,
So cold and pale and drawn,
And I sigh for the midnight's passion
That grows so chill at dawn.
But her sleep and her dreams are cruel,
And her fair, smooth limbs are tossed
With the fever that lust begetteth
From the joy that was won and lost.

Oh, God, that the ashes linger
When the fire has had its way!
Oh, night, you are strange, repulsive,
In the glory and glare of day.
Oh, woman, I hate you sleeping
As I worshiped you anon.
I loved you in life and passion,
But now you are worn and wan.

Those eyes with the love-light in them,
Those lips that were pressed to mine,
Those cheeks that burned my bosom
Like the glow of a wondrous wine,
They were dreams that my fancy painted
In the darkness and depths of night,
They were witcheries wrought by madness.
They have passed in the sun's fierce light.

Sleep on in the gairish glitter
Of the day that tells your tale,
Sleep on in the awful glory
That wraps you in its veil.
Wake not, for a heart is broken,
And love at your side lies dead.
I go — but my curse remaineth
Like a shadow above your bed.

“WELL, I TOLD YOU WHEN WE STARTED
THAT THIS CITY OF NEW YORK
CAN SUPPLY THE WINE OF FANCY.
KINDLY LET ME DRAW THE CORK!”

—A Pirate's Bride.

PRINCE SPAGHETTI'S VENGEANCE

NOT where gairish lights are gleaming,
Not in brilliant banquet-hall,
Not where waiters, silent, solemn,
Make the gaudy grandeur pall;

Not where wine is so expensive
That your very thirst seems crime,
And to wet your whistle often
Is a recklessness sublime —

But for us a quiet corner
In a side street, down a stair;
Vive Bohème and vive La Ria!
Who would be a millionaire?

Here are brains, served up *en bon mot*,
Here's spaghetti, piping hot;
Here's a crowd of jolly fellows,
Well contented with their lot.

Mayhap, as the feast progresses,
And the wine flows with the wit,
Visions come, and fancy whispers
'Tis a palace where we sit.

'Tis the Palace Macaroni,
Built in ages long ago,
By a count of many titles,
Where the waves of Tiber flow.

How we got there doesn't matter.
Maraschino? Yes — a drop.
Thanks! A little bit of cognac?
Just a trifle on the top.

And the palace by the Tiber,
Where we dine to-night in state,
Here it was Count Macaroni
Met his sad, heart-rending fate.

Rome was then in fermentation,
As she used to be at times.
— Strange how black that ancient city
Is with most inhuman crimes! —

Then it was that Macaroni
Princess Gorgonzola met—
Yes, methinks your face is like her,
Seen beyond this cigarette!

Gorgonzola! She was charming!
Black-eyed maiden, ripe to fall
In the arms of love, if mother
Should desert the orchard wall.

Macaroni! Gorgonzola!
They were such a handsome pair
That in strolling by the river
E'en the boatmen had to stare.

Well, where am I? In La Ria's?
No; Saint Peter knows I'm not.
Just another sip of cognac?
Thanks — it touched the very spot.

Well, the Count and Gorgonzola
By a villain were pursued;
Prince Spaghetti was his title —
Scion of an evil brood.

Prince Spaghetti loved the maiden,
In a weird and wicked way,
And he swore that Macaroni
Must forego the light of day.

So he mixed a potent poison
In a glass of ruby wine.
Yes, I'll light one more perfecto!
Gad, I think the earth is mine!

One more little sip of cognac?
Thanks, I cannot say thee nay.
Well, where was I? Oh! Spaghetti
Macaroni meant to slay.

Did I kill him? Say, my fair one?
You with Gorgonzola's eyes!
Did I make him drink the poison?
Answer, you who were the prize!

Well, the tale is nearly ended.
Strange that I should live to-night,
Dining at La Ria's with you!
Thanks! That cognac's out of sight!

A PELL STREET BELLE

YER can soi what hits yer hardest,
Charlie Sing, but dey wuz swell!
I'd been smokin' like a heathen
When I wandered into Pell.

Now, de poipe I hit dat evenin'
Made my brain buzz wid de drug,
But 'twuz swells I see at supper,
Yer kin bet yer Chinee mug!

Dey wuz sittin' at a table
In de middle o' de room,
And de Chineemen wuz gathered
Kind o' silent in de gloom.

Der wuz loidies dere in bunnets
As ud make a queen feel proud,
And der jokes der men wuz crackin'
Seemed to tickle all de crowd.

Dey wuz eatin' wid de chop-sticks
— Which dey handled mighty bad—
And I heard one of dem soiin'
Dat he liked de "Chinee fad."

What's de "Chinee fad," now, Charlie?
"Tain't what dey give me to eat,
But de swells wuz gettin' somethin'
Dat dey soi cannot be beat.

Stop your Chinee, heathen grinnin'!
Don't you t'ink I'm talkin' straight?
Dey wuz swells I seen a-dinin',
Quit! I'll smash yer pig-tailed pate!

Well, dey drank de wine like heathen,
And dey ate de shark's-fins, too;
And de bird's-nest soup and pigeon,
And de mushroom-chicken stew.

What's de matter wid ye, Charlie?
Stop! I'll black yer blinkin' eye!
Do ye t'ink I'd take de trouble
To invent a bloomin' lie?

In de shadow I wuz keepin',
So dey wouldn't see me face,
Fer I heard a loidy sayin'
Dat she t'ought me out o' place.

Out o' place! Dat's rich, my Charlie!
Out o' place? Well, hardly dat!
I'm at home in Pell street shanties
As de most Chineesy rat.

Dey wuz out o' place, eh, Charlie?
Dinin' dere in howlin' style!
Come, I'll hit de poipe dis evenin',
Den I'll sleep a little while.

Well, yer grinnin', greasy heathen,
What is dat I hear yer soi?
Dat de drug has made me crazy?
Dat I'm gettin' off de way?

Yer kin soi what yer dam wanter;
Den, my Charlie, go to ——!
But I dined last night, yer pagan,
Near a whoopin', howlin' swell!

THE TORY'S GUEST

WHEN you search this ancient city —
Are you heeding my remarks? —
Let me tell you there are phantoms
In the shadow of St. Mark's.

But 'twas not for restless spectres,
Nor the relics of Lang Syne,
That we sought this famous corner;
Nay, we came here but to dine.

Aye, to dine on haasen-pfeffer
With Hungarians and such.
Surely, with such carnal cravings
Old St. Mark's is not in touch!

Give us, then, oh smiling waiter,
Talking your outlandish tongue,
Dishes weird and wines as witching,
Never yet by poet sung.

For your bill-of-fare is teeming
With queer words I cannot rhyme.
If your dishes were as tasteless
— Well, your dinner were a crime.

But we like what you are serving !
Yes, fill up my glass again !
Strange how that old picture trembles
Just above that group of men !

See ! A ruffled courtier sitting
In knee-breeches at our board !
In his frame on painted canvas
He was not to be ignored.

Here, we'll pledge our ghostly comrade
In a cup of Rhenish wine.
See, how bright his eyes are gleaming !
Well, I'm glad he wished to dine !

Hark, what's that he seems to mutter,
As he wipes his ghostly lips ?
Surely, he is talking to us
Of the good king's gallant ships !

“In the bay they’re riding proudly!”
Waiter, fill his glass again.
What is that he says so faintly
Of the king’s red-coated men?

“Once I owned this fine old mansion,
I, a ‘Tory,’ loyal, true;
And I hated — could you blame me? —
Washington’s rebellious crew.”

Surely, this is not in keeping
With an old house now in vogue
With the restless sons of freedom
— This old Tory is a rogue.

Here, where once he flourished gayly,
Loyal to his king and faith,
Sits he sad 'mid rebel children,
Weird and wan, a wretched wraith.

Give him wine and let him chatter
Of the times he loved and lost!
Come, drink up, Sir Royal Relic!
Ah, that bumper's bravely tossed!

So you loved King George, poor fellow,
And 'tis hard to see us here,
Where the toast to kings was given
In the past a hundred-year?

Well, cheer up, your eyes look brighter,
But your smile is bitter yet;
Long-haired rebels of the future
Cannot help but make you fret.

Ah, I see, you cannot stand us;
Though you tried to be polite,
And, before you left the table,
Yes, I heard you say "Good-night!"

In your frame, a daub of pigment,
We will leave you, Tory Sir.
Mayhap you will need to slumber,
After all this noise and stir.

Well, God bless you in your error;
We must fare into the night,
Leaving you, poor ghost, heart-broken
At your mansion's wretched plight.

See, the moon around the steeple
Throws a cloak of silver sparks,
But grim spectres haunt our footsteps
In the shadow of St. Marks!

CUPID'S HANDICAP

I

THE odds were long against me
As I gazed upon her face,
While the fevered crowd around us
Talked about the coming race.
She was fair and young and graceful;
I was gray and growing old:
E'en to love so fair a woman
Was a dream supremely bold.

II

I had bet my money freely
On the favorite to win;
And she smiled to see my tickets,
Saying: "Really, it's a sin!
But I think," she faltered slowly,
"That I'd risk a little bit
On another horse that's entered,
Though I never heard of it."

III

In amazement I inquired
If she'd had an "inside tip,"
But she looked so clearly puzzled
That I knew I'd made a slip.
So I said, with gentle fervor,
Gazing at her with a smile:
"The favorite will beat 'em all;
Yes — beat 'em by a mile."

IV

The plump red cheeks turned almost white,
The little mouth grew set.
"I'm sorry to disturb you, but —
I really want to bet."
What could I do, when she said this,
Though knowing that her whim
Might make her well-stocked pocket-book
Look, really, very slim.

V

“Upon what horse, my reckless miss,
Your money will you place?”
“On Cupid, please,” she whispered low,
Not looking in my face.
“A skate! A nag! A coward, too!”
I cried, well-nigh in rage:
“That horse is only fitted for
The drawing of a stage.”

VI

“No, no,” she said, “I like his looks;
You see he isn’t lame.
Look how he canters to the post;
I’ll back him on his name.
Come take this bill — ’tis twenty, see, —
And put it on him, quick.”
Off then, I rushed exclaiming loud:
“He’ll never do the trick!”

VII

A thousand dollars 'gainst her bill
The "bookie" gladly bet,
And on me smiled sarcastically,
As though I ran in debt.
Back to the stand I rushed in haste,
Just as the cry "They're off"
Rose from ten thousand voices
Like a giant's fevered cough.

VIII

Down by the stand the thund'ring steeds
Rushed past us in a whirl,
While to my side, pressed closely, stood
A pale and panting girl.
A mass of color through the dust
Broke on my straining sight,
As far across the verdant sward
I watched that frantic flight.

IX

On, on, they rush, while from the crowd
 The favorite's name is heard,
And by our side a man cries out :
 " He's going like a bird!"
The trembling figure on my arm
 Draws closer to me yet;
The sympathy she seems to crave
 Makes me forgive her bet.

X

Hand clasped in hand, our gaze is bent
 Upon the fleeing rout ;
The stretch is reached and down they come,
 While frantic thousands shout.
The favorite's name rings out again,
 But not alone at last.
'Tis Cupid that has challenged him,
 'Tis Cupid — coming fast.

XI

Whip hard, ye boys! Spur, lift your
mounts!

The wire is just ahead.
Ye gods, it is a gallant fight!

What is that ye dread?
The favorite is losing heart!

See, in the final strides,
'Tis Cupid that has caught him now!
Gad, how that jockey rides!

XII

Hip, hip, hurray! The race is won,
And Cupid's name is cried.

My arm is thrown too boldly
Round the dear one at my side.

"I've won! I've won!" she cries in joy.
"Oh, Cupid — he was true!"

"You've won!" I can't suppress a groan.
She whispers: "So have you."

A PIRATE'S BRIDE

SHOULD you say there was no romance
In a town that deftly blends,
In a picturesque mosaic,
All the Old World's odds and ends?

In a city where the scapegoats
Of all other countries meet
'Tis a crazy-quilt of nations
That is seen upon the street.

When a villain with a record,
Who has cut his victim's throat,
Reaches here, we do not balk him.
Let him in! He has a vote!

And, perchance, his reformation
May go on and up apace,
And his life may grow quite righteous—
But his story's in his face.

Come with me, my jolly comrades!
We will dine to-night in state
With a Portuguese most pious—
He was once a pirate's mate.

Here we are! The den is cosy.
Do not turn so pale, my dear!
Don't you see mine host is harmless,
'Though his eye's a trifle queer?

Oft, 'tis said, his evil glances
Struck a chill where blood ran red,
While the guns were belching fire,
And the decks were strewn with dead.

N'importe! That is nothing, really,
For he expiates his crimes
By refreshing tired mortals
With the food of other climes.

Try the soup! 'Tis flavored nicely;
Yet they say, when he was loose,
That his culinary longings
Were to cook a merchant's goose.

Try the wine! The fish is tasty!
Come, fill up your glass again!
Fond of olives? They are flavored
With the sun-kissed air of Spain.

To your eyes, I drink, my loved one,
In a bumper rosy-red —
Strange that with the smile you give me
Comes a vision of the dead!

Can it be that we are dining
In the cabin of a ship
That is stained with many murders?
Thanks; I'll take another sip.

I'm the captain ! I'm a pirate !
I've a princess for my prize !
(Queer that looking at that Greaser
Should so fill my mind with lies !)

Well, my captive, be not mournful,
For the ship is running free.
Ho, for woman and for folly
On the dark, blue, rolling sea !

What care I that men lie sleeping
'Neath the waves where they were
thrown?

What care I that you are widowed?
You are mine, and mine alone!

Dry your tears! A pirate loves you!
Let the storms and tempests rise!
We are safe within my cabin.
There is sunshine in your eyes.

What is that I hear you murmur?
There is blood upon my hand?
No; 'tis wine. My darling, kiss me!
May we never see the land!

What could be a kinder future
Than the first place at my side?
Come, a toast, my heart, I give you!
Come, we'll drink "The Pirate's Bride!"

Ah, I hear the sea mews murmur,
And the wind is rising fast;
But my arms are thrown around you,
Kiss me; you are mine at last!

What is that? The cheese and coffee?
Oh, my dream was weird indeed!
Came of dining in a corner
With a cook of pirate breed!

**“I HOLD THAT THE TRUE AGE OF WISDOM IS WHEN
WE ARE BOYS AND GIRLS, AND NOT WOMEN AND
MEN.”**

—James Whitcomb Riley.

IN MEMORIAM

EUGENE FIELD.

 HE sang to us there in the gloaming
The sorrows of "Little Boy
Blue,"
Of the toys that he kissed in the twilight
When he bid them forever adieu.
And the song, it shall be with us alway,
A toy that shall whisper of you,
Gone into the land of the shadows
To find your "Little Boy Blue."

WAR AND PEACE

 HIS face grew pale with the passion
His old war tales begot,
And we traced on his cheek the
fissure

Of the scar where he was shot;
While the white of his hair gleamed
strangely,
As his hot youth spake again,
And we felt in our veins the glory
Of war that is waged by men.

Of deeds that were done by heroes,
Of death that came whizzing by,
Of the charge and the clash and the cutting
Of foes that were eye to eye—
All these in his words he painted,
All these we could see that night,
As we sat by an open fire
And he told us of fight on fight.

No ears for the pattering footsteps
Of a baby boy had we,
Till a white-robed figure, panting,
Cried: "Grandpa, loot at me!
I couldn't seep in my cribby"—
And then there came a pause—
"I wanted to tell 'oo sumpin'
To write to Santa Claus."

The old gray head was bending
Above the baby's form.
The old sword-arm wound gently,
To keep the wee boy warm.
"I wish 'oo'd tell old Santy
To bring me, when he comes,
A sabre and sash and helmet,
Two trumpets and three drums.

"And, Grandpa, if he's got 'em,
I'd have the mostest fun
On Christmas mornin' shootin'
A cannon and a gun!"
The old man's eyes grew heavy
With phantom pictures then—
He saw the boy in manhood
Shot down 'mid dying men;

He saw the stricken figures,
The ghastly fruit of strife,
He heard the groans that echo
When Death makes war on Life.
Above the child he bendeth,
His voice is heard again:
For peace on earth he prayeth,
For "Peace, good-will to men!"

FAITH

STRANGE the questions that they ask
me,
As they gather at my side,
When the day, in glory passing,
Decks the heavens in its pride;
And the splendor of the sunset
Fills their antic minds with awe
At the weird and waving phantoms
That the flickering shadows draw.

And their little souls grope darkly
Where the wisest men have passed
Silent, sad, and vaguely hoping
That the answer comes at last.
And I hear their gentle voices
Asking me, their earthly guide,
To explain Life's greatest problem
To the babies at my side.

Evening falls, the shadows deepen;
And the dear one at my knee,
Gazing far into the twilight,
Seems to feel the mystery,
Seems to know his question's futile,
Seems to know my answer's weak,
That my soul is heavy-laden
With the words that I must speak.

Then comes silence; and my darling
To my side draws closer yet,
With his little arm entwining,
While my eyes seem strangely wet.
On my face I feel his kisses,
From his pockets bulge his toys;
Then he whispers, bending nearer;
"God, I know, loves little boys."

A MUSICALE

I

'~~WAS~~ WAS the mystery and magic
'~~OF~~ Of the harmony they made,
'~~OF~~ 'Twas the passion of the love-song
With its wondrous light and shade;
'Twas the witchery of voices,
More than human in their power,
'Twas the midnight set to music
When the angels tell the hour.

II

But there's music subtler, sweeter,
Than the songs the masters sing;
There is rapture more exquisite
Than the joy their voices bring.
There is ecstasy more stirring
Than the happiness we feel
When their liquid voices tell us
What our hearts cannot reveal.

III

In the darkness, while the echo
 Of the chorus that they sung
Seems as if a spirit whispered
 In a soft, celestial tongue,
Comes a voice, a baby's lisping,
 From the cradle where she lies;
Then I hear her say "I love you,"
 And the echo droops and dies.

'TIS RILEY'S HOUR

I

THE children's hour they call it,
And they gather at my knee
For a story or a poem
Or a bit of history
From the records of the giants,
Or a tale of fairy lore;
And then when they have heard it
Of course they ask for more —
Till my brain grows weary, empty,
And I feel that they are bored
With the oft-repeated nonsense
From my very scanty hoard.

II

But the West begot a poet
Who can touch the simpler chords,
And stir the souls of children
By the magic of his words.
And they listen, earnest, eager,
As I read the riant rhyme
That tells a simple story
In a "melody sublime."
And they love those "glossy hosses,"
And "the man who worked for Pa,"
And the wicked little rascal
Who disobeyed his Ma.

III

And I know one gentle youngster
Who says when he's a man
He'll go and seek in person
"At lubly 'Lizbeth Ann."
And a merry maiden often
Has lost her smile and cried
At the "ittle kiss for dolly"
That the fretful man denied.
And so we thank you, Riley,
When the children's hour is passed
And the little forms are kneeling
Before the throne at last.

Somehow, I think, their voices
Reach higher toward the sky
When your songful soul has taught them
Now to laugh and now to cry.

THE NEWSPAPER JOKER

I

YES, yes, my son, I know I'm "cross."
I cannot sing to-night,
Nor tell you some weird fairy-tale
To fill you with affright.
For all day long my pen has tried
To fling the flippant ink,
To make men laugh who read the news,
For fear that they might think;
For thinking, boy, is out of style,
And men prefer to read
Whate'er will make them joyous, smile
— And, so, I scrawl my screed.

II

But you, my son, should give me grace,
For while I joke, you eat;
A little humor — paid by space —
Means shoes upon your feet.
That little toy I bought to-night,
To furnish you with fun,
It cost me, darling, nothing much
— In short, 'twas just a "pun,"
And if, perchance, you break the wheel,
Or split a weakly spoke,
'Twill not be such a fatal thing
— I'll crack a daily joke.

III

Then let me off, to-night, my boy;
My fun has all run out.
The frolic fancies of my brain
Dance painfully about.
To-morrow I will curb my wit
And give the public stint,
That I may have a gem for you
We'll never put in print.
So run to bed, my little man,
And kiss me — so — good-night.
And I? — oh, never mind, my boy;
I — I — you know, must write.

GOD'S ANSWER

T the twilight hour they gathered
For a story at my side,
With the princess, blue-eyed baby,
On my lap enthroned in pride.
And the setting sun in passing
Kissed her smiling face good-night,
While the others, loving, joyous,
Laughed in chorus at the sight.

And my boy before the princess
Bowed his loyal head in awe,
For his gentle soul was thrilling
At the angel face he saw.
Then he raised his hand and gently
Touched the dear one's waving curl,
And his pleading voice implored me:
"Keep her, please, a baby girl."

Years have passed, the sun sinks slowly,
And I sit alone to-night,
While hot tears bedim my vision,
And the world has lost its light.
And a prayer a father maketh
To a God whose kindly hand
Keeps my baby girl to meet me
In the far-off twilight land.

“WHO SO SHALL TELLE A TALE AFTER A MAN,
HE MOSTE REHERSE, AS NEIGHE AS EVER HE CAN,
EVERICH WORD, IF IT BE IN HIS CHARGE,
ALL SPEKE HE NEVER SO RUDELY AND SO LARGE;
OR ELLES HE MOSTE TELLEN HIS TALE UNTREWE,
OR FEINEN THINGES, OR FINDEN WORDS NEWE.”

— *Chaucer.*

THE QUEEN'S CROWN

(At Harwich is kept a musty document which runs thus : "For repairing ye Queen's Crown, which ye King threw into ye fire, item 3s. 6d.")

I

King Edward was a gallant prince,
But was not always so,
As sadly learned his gentle queen,
Phillippa of Hainault.
It was at Felixstowe, their place
At Harwich on the shore,
That Ned, in very ugly mood,
At good Phillippa swore.
Just what his reason may have been
'Tis now too late to state;
Enough is known for us to judge
His rage was very great.

II

Perhaps she'd flirted with a page,
Or had not aired the sheets,
Perhaps she'd failed to compliment
His most heroic feats;
Perhaps 'twas nothing more than that
His bile had made him mad.
N'importe! The fact has come to light
He acted like a cad.
They keep at Harwich to this day
A goldsmith's modest score
Which proves King Edward must have been
Unpleasant when he swore.

III

It seems ye King came home one night,
And, letting loose his ire,
Hurled angrily ye Queen's bright crown
Into ye blazing fire.
What said Philippa, who can tell?
But, quickly bending down,
She snatched the gleaming bauble there —
And saved her melting crown;
While Edward flushed and angrily
Flashed on her looks of spite,
— A king uncrowned by temper there,
A most unpleasant sight.

IV

Then to the goldsmith went ye crown,
And to her room ye Queen;
While Edward felt the rush of shame,
And skulked away, I ween.
For surely such a mighty prince,
A warrior so bold,
Could not but blush on finding that
He'd been a common scold.
No harm was done, save to her pride—
The jeweler could fix
The diadem dismembered there
For only three-and-six.

V

Of course Philippa's woe is worth
At least one tender tear,
For what she suffered from her spouse
And in her regal gear.
But read the scroll of hist'ry, friend,
And, as your eye runs down
The bloody record of the past,
Reflect: Philippa's crown
Was saved at small expense to her,
In spite of Edward's tricks—
It might have cost her head and neck
Instead of three-and-six !

FAME

I

'~~WUZ~~ at Gibraltar that I set
And seen the redcoats drill,
A-thinkin' o' my granther
Who hed fit at Bunker Hill.
At Bunker Hill he fit and bled,
A danged heroic striplin',
And warthy wuz the deed he done
O' pen o' Rudyard Kiplin'.

II

Then to my side a sergeant come
And asked me what I done thar;
He seemed to think, that Britisher,
Our eagle might make fun thar.
I turned and eyed him, kind o' mad —
I think he hed ben tipplin' —
And told him thet he seemed to me
"Begot o' Rudyard Kiplin".

III

Jes' what he thought I do not know,
His face wuz red and flustered,
His eyes wuz sullen as he watched
 The redcoats whar they mustered;
I heard the word o' starn command,
 The distant ocean ripplin',
And then he sed — I almost laffed — :
 “H'I don't know Rudyard Kiplin'!”

IV

I could not guess the truth at once,
Perched up thar on the rocks
And thinkin' o' the ballads thet
We'd read at Windsor Locks;
And so I sed, to ease my mind,
With satire that wuz cripplin',
"W'y, Tommy Atkins, kin it be
Ye're ignorant o' Kiplin'?"

V

I fear that redcoat never felt
The stinger o' my shaft;
He looked me in the eye as ef
He really thought me daft.
"Move hon," he cried, "hand don't come
'ere
A shoutin 'Rudyard Kiplin',
Hor was the name — h'I've most forgot,
Perhaps 'twas 'Kudyard Riplin'."

THE EVE OF PINGYANG

~~THE~~ THERE were revelry and devil'ry
~~THE~~ In Pingyang's ancient halls,
~~THE~~ While the foemen, stern, relentless,
Formed beneath the frowning walls.

There were jollity, frivolity,
While song and wine went 'round,
And the sentry, pale and silent,
Shuddered at the gruesome sound.

Where the leaders Yeh and Bahō
Kept the pace with Cho and Tsang,
There was red paint, running oceans,
In the center of Pingyang.

Only once has hist'ry told us
Of such reckless hullabloo—
'Twas the crowd at Richmond's blow-out
On the eve of Waterloo.

High the dancing-girls were kicking
(While the Japs were loading guns),
Singing songs and telling stories,
Mayhap making Chinese puns.

General Yeh was drunk and jolly,
While he swore he'd eat a Jap;
General Bahō, quite bombastic,
Held a danseuse on his lap.

General Cho was getting groggy
With the rice wine he had drunk,
And he boasted that in battle
He was never known to flunk.

There were playing-cards in plenty,
While arose the sound of dice,
And the odor from the kitchen
Told a tale of roasted mice.

Hell has broken loose in Pingyang
Where the yellow banners wave,
While madmen rule the city
That they are sworn to save.

And the night has passed so quickly
That when they hear the gun
That tells their sober sentinels
The battle has begun,

The generals and dancing-girls,
The feasters and the foe,
Are mixed in one wild fantasy
— A fantasy of woe.

THE SKELETON'S CONFESSION

(On Friday morning, April 20, 1886, a skeleton was dug up from beneath the Yale College campus. The remains are unidentified, as history gives no account of a burial on that historic sward.—New Haven Dispatch.)

I

 PEAK! Speak! Thou bony find,
That without flesh or mind,
Shakes in the April wind,
What is thy hist'ry?
Dressed not in English clothes,
But with thy slender toes
Lying in calm repose,
Tell us thy mist'ry!

II

“Wast thou a Freshman old
Whose deeds, though manifold,
Seemed to be much too bold
 To upper classmen?
Mayhap a tutor, thou,
Killed in a lively row,
When, as might happen now,
 You would not ‘pass’ men?”

III

Then from the fleshless freak
Came a peculiar squeak,
And he essayed to speak
 Of his lost glory.
With a strange, haunted look
Out from his ribs he took
What seemed to be a book —
 Then told his story.

IV

“I was an umpire, friend;
And, if your ears you’ll lend,
You’ll learn the bitter end
That overtook me.
First came an awful yell.
Eggs then about me fell —
‘Tis a sad tale to tell —
‘Tis awful, look thee.

V

“ ‘T was when baseball was young,
Ere flippant bards had sung
How the swift sphere is flung
Down to the batter.
I knew the game right well,
And, though ‘tis I who tell,
No better umpires yell —
But then, no matter !

VI

“ ‘T was a great game that day,
Warm was the student’s play —
Would I had been away
Far from that college !
For when they ‘judgment’ asked
I was severely tasked,
And they at once unmasks
My lack of knowledge.

VII

“ I had not seen the ball
When the swift runner’s fall
Made all the players call :
‘ Hi ! is he out ? ’
Wild was the guess I made ;
Startled and half afraid,
‘ Safe ’ was the word I said
Then wheeled about.

VIII

“Loud was the shout that rang,
As in grave fear I sprang,
Having no wish to hang,
And quickly scooted.
But he who seeks to beat
Yale men in fever heat
Cannot effect the feat
If badly booted.

IX

“Not long the race that day.
Firmly prepared to slay,
Giving no time to pray,
They cut my lung out.
Such was my awful fate;
Under the hard home plate
Placed they my heavy weight,
Where I had sung out.”

X

So closed the umpire’s tale,
While I turned deadly pale
At the deep, mournful wail
That he delivered.
And, as I turned to go
Far from that frame of woe,
“Judgment” he cried, so low
That I cold-shivered.

MARTHA WASHINGTON'S GREEN GOWN

[“He (Washington) further saved her (Martha) much of the detail of ordering her own clothing.”—Paul Leicester Ford in “The True George Washington.”]

I

GEORGE ordered Martha's clothing
With ye neatest kind o' knack;
He writ to London tradesmen
For “a salmon-colored Sack,
A salmon-colored Tabby,
With satin flowers to boot.”
How wonderful to look upon
Was Martha in the suit!

II

“A Handkerchief and Tucker, too,
And Ruffles made o’ lace.”
No marvel that her pictures show
A smile on Martha’s face!
George Washington, ye warrior,
Ye statesman, ever great,
Shone bright when writing letters
To London for his mate!

III

“White Satin Shoes,” he called for,
And of “ye smallest size.”
(When Widow Custis married,
She really won a prize!)
But when we read his letters
’Tis hardly strange we ask
Why Martha wished to order
A curious “black mask.”

IV

'Tis surely not in keeping
With what we know of her
She'd use a mask for reasons
We'd otherwise infer.
Nor is it hardly probable
That when ye mask arrived
To crib it for flirtations
George Washington contrived.

V

Ye problem's most unsolvable,
But let it not be thought
There lingers yet a mystery
With everything George bought.
We learn from musty missives
That Washington once sent
To London for his Martha—
When he was President—

VI

A sack o' greenish color,
To be redyed again.
The words are quite amusing
That issued from his pen:
"If so should be the cloak should prove
Unworthy for a sack,
'Twill make a gorgeous night gown
When we shall get it back."

VII

What fate ye cloth, redyed, obtained
'Tis hard to tell to-day,
For Martha may have had it back
As green again as May.
But to ye mind a picture comes,
And Martha now is seen
A-roaming 'round at midnight
Berobed in faded green.

VIII

O Night Robe, dyed so long ago,
Full late is ye'r renown,
But green ye'r memory shall be,
New gem in George's crown.
Ye traveled far o'er land and sea
To keep ye'r colors blent,
To match the love for Martha
Of our first President.

IX

So let the gossips say their say,
And tattle as they will,
This garment of the long ago
Shall whisper to us still
The chivalry of Washington,
The thoughtful love he bore,
Made manifest in one green gown
That his dear Martha wore.

“ENWRAPPED IN PEACE THE ISLANDS GLEAM
LIKE EMERALD GEMS IN SAPPHIRE SET,
AND FAR AWAY, AS IN A DREAM,
FLOAT PURPLE FIELDS WHERE HEROES MET.”

—*Wallace Bruce.*

THE HEART OF BRUCE

I

EARY and old and worn and ill,
King Robert, valiant knight,
His chiefs and barons called to
him —

They saddened at the sight.
Then from the throng the dying lord
James Douglas summoned forth,
James Douglas, famed in border song,
The Lion of the North.
Thus spake the king, his trembling hand
Stretched forth in sad appeal:
“The years have proved you Douglas, mine,
A knight both brave and leal.
A vow I made the sepulchre
To win from pagan hands;
Alas, the Lord Christ calleth me
Away from warring lands.
From warring lands to peace I go,
To you I leave my vow.
James Douglas shall assoilzie me,
And keep my oath, I trow.

Embalmed, my heart, when I am gone,
To Holy Land thy care
Shall bring it safe to sepulchre —
Our Lord lies sleeping there.”
A sound of weeping, when he ceased
The old hall echoed through.
Stern warriors bowed their heads in grief —
The only grief they knew.

Then Douglas, bending loyally
Before his dying king,
Made speech and said in sadness :
“ My hand and sword I bring
That they may serve thee glorified,
As they have served thee here.
Thy heart to Holy Land shall go ;
My shield shall be its bier.”
“ Thanks be to God,” King Robert cried,
“ For now I die in peace.
On Douglas’s shield my heart at rest
Shall give my soul release.”
Then from the hall the courtiers filed,
With solemn step and slow,
And white-haired warriors tearfully
Bowed down their heads in woe.
But Robert, King of Scotland,
And Douglas, weeping there,
In awe and veneration,
Knelt down in silent prayer.

II

Where the chivalry of Spain
'Gainst the Saracens were drawn
Making ready for the battle,
At the coming of the dawn,
There in breastplate, helmet, harness,
Sat the Douglas on his steed,
With a thousand gallant Scotsmen,
Sworn to aid him in his need.
Where his heart was beating wildly
Lay the silent heart of Bruce,
As the night shades, creeping westward,
Still maintained the fleeting truce.

Then the sun, in splendor breaking,
Set the Moorish hosts aflame,
While the face of Douglas brightened,
As he spake the dead king's name.
Forward through the rising moisture
That the sun-kissed earth exhaled
Dashed the knights, the Douglas leading;
Douglas, he who never failed.
"Forward toward the Moorish center!
Strike for Scotland and our Lord!
Die, ye heathen! God is with us!
Ye shall feel the Christian's sword!"

Short the battle, long the resting
For the Douglas and his band !
See, he holds the heart of Robert,
As a token, in his hand :
"Pass thou onward," cried the leader,
"As your wont was long ago !
Heart of Bruce, who would not follow,
Be the issue weal or woe ?"
Then he cast the relic forward,
Spurring onward in his might,
Where the dead king's heart was lying
'Neath the turmoil of the fight.
"Strike, ye Scotsmen, for the honor
Of the heart that beat for you !
Is it not a Douglas leading ?
Great thy fame for derring-do !"

Fierce the combat, short the issue;
In the dust the Douglas lay
Where the heart of Bruce had fallen
In the centre of the fray.
And at evening there they found him,
Smiling still in martial pride,
Where the heart of Bruce was lying —
Grand the death the Douglas died!

“THIS ONLY IS THE WITCHCRAFT I HAVE USED.”

—Othello.

A SALEM WITCH

Scene—Gaol, Salem, Mass., 1680

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Mother Malden—Sentenced to die at sunrise for witchcraft.

The Gaoler—A man in middle life.

Mother Malden

[Seated near a table, center]

IT IS near the hour of six — and I must die
For crimes committed by the tongues of
men.

They say I mumble — that my looks are wild,
That cream turns sour because I wish it so!
They say I walk disguised as cat or dog,
And fly at midnight on a crooked stick.
The huswife whispers that I spoil her bread;
The children die — 'tis said I murder them.
And grim, stern men erect a scaffold there

[Pointing to window, rear]

That I be punished for the Devil's sins.

[Arises and strides up and down the room]

A witch — they call me witch and hoot at me;
At me — who once read love in others' eyes,
Who gave to beggars and who healed the sick,
Who knelt to God and praised the world He
made.

They murder me because the crops are bad,
The sun too hot or midnight's wind too cold.

[*Stands listening. Hammering beard outside the window*]

Hark, how they pound the nails into the wood,
As if with every blow they slew a witch!

'Tis strange they leave me all alone to plot
With Satan and his wicked angels here.

If power I had, such as these men assert,
I'd flit through yonder window as a bat,
And breathe a poison through the morning air
Which should beget a pestilence by noon!

How pale the face of dawn looks in at me,
White with the horror of the day to come!

[*A laugh heard outside the window*]

But man is joyous — for a witch must die
To give him surcease from his lust for blood!

[*Enter Gaoler, left*]

Gaoler

Your hour is nearly come! You sent for me?

Mother Malden

[Moves toward him. *He retreats before her*]

I sent for you to tell you that my heart
Goes out to you for kindness you have done —
Done to a helpless woman, doomed to death
For this alone — that age has marked her face
With lines that frighten babies as they look,
That she, forsooth, doth hobble on a cane,
That when she walks the very dogs slink off —
Dragged to her grave because her day is past
And age is hateful in the sight of men!

Gaoler

Peace, witch ! Your mutterings offend my ears !
If aught I've done in kindness 'twas because
I am a man — and had a mother once —
Not that I held you innocent of crime.

[Turns to leave her]

Mother Malden

Go not, until you hear what I must say.
Alone of all the men in this mad town,
Your words and deeds have gentle been to me.
[Takes a paper from her bosom and again draws near him]
I go to death and leave a tarnished name,
Scorned by the world for deeds that spirits
wrought.

I leave besides what men most prize on earth,
The wizard Gold — the evil sprite they love.
Start not ; my hour of doom shall find no lie
Soiling these lips so soon to close in death !
Gold — won with the labor of my early years —
I've buried far from hence — for you to seek.

Here on this parchment — when my time has
come —

You'll find the pathway to my hidden wealth.
To you I offer it for this alone,
That in my day of sorrow you have saved
My heart from losing all benevolence,
Have kept my soul from turning black with hate.
This gold — I saved and hid it years ago,
And dreamt my boy should live to make it his,
And grow to greatness in this fretful world ;
A man of riches among men of rank.
All that is passed ; the dream was mockery !
And now I offer you his heritage
— Small payment for the kindness you have
shown.
Here, take the parchment, and peruse it well.
'Twill tell its secret but to patient care.

Gaoler

[Putting up his hand in refusal]

Does not e'en death affright a witch's soul?
Your words are honey but your spirit gall!
What said the judges when they sent you here?
Beware, they warned me, of the spells she casts!
She'll turn your gaol into a devil's den—
And play a scurvy trick with bolts and bars.
Avoid her eye—there is a fever in it;
Touch not her hand or palsy comes to you.
Think you, old woman, I've forgot their words?
Or hold you less a witch because of this
That you would wheedle me with tales of gold
And give me parchment marked by Satan's self?
Gold? I would give my *life* to win it but
My *soul* is not a price I dare to pay.
Put back yon scroll beside your wicked heart,
And squander not the sands on evil things.

Mother Malden

[Draws herself erect, holding the parchment close to her breast. Speaks wildly.]

Lost! Lost! My last kind thought has turned again

And plunged a dagger into my old heart.
There is no love on earth, no hope beyond!
God in his vengeance still pursueth me,
And I shall die with curses on my lips,
My lips that once knew kisses and a prayer.

How long ago it was I prayed to Him !
I cannot count the years, but now the night
When last I bowed before the throne I see
In all the glory of its moonwhite garb.
I feel the fervor of the prayer I breathed
At midnight, kneeling by my bed alone
And thanking God that he had blessed my son
And granted him the precious boon of health.
An owl disturbed my prayer, and starting up
I heard the hooting of the evil bird
So close at hand my very heart stood still.
The hooting turned to howling and the night
Grew horrid with the cries of savage men.
From my prayers I rose to peril. See
Upon my brow the scar remaineth yet

[Wildly throwing back her hair from her forehead]

Where sought the tomahawk a mother's life.
Curse God? Nay, though they stole my boy
away
And left me dying in the moonlight there !
Curse God? I could not, though I prayed no
more.
But now I go to death, spurned of my God,
And in my dying hour I raise my arm on high
And curse the day that gave me birth —
Aye, fling my hatred at the King of Kings !

Gaoler

[Putting up his band]

Hush, in the name of Him who scourgeth sin,
Or on us all the wrath of God will fall!

Peace, woman, for your tale has roused
The vagrom visions of the vanished years.

[Mother Malden seats herself at the table and rests her
head on her arm as if weeping]

Speak, speak, and tell me — as you hope for
rest —

Where lost you son and all your brightest
dreams?

Mother Malden

[*Looks up at him indifferently*]

Your idle questions fret my dying hour!
'Twas years ago — we lived at Plymouth Bay,
And from my cabin — by the purple sea —
I saw God's smile reflected from the deep,
And at my side a gentle boy looked up
And saw the evening star in summer's sky,
And kissed my hand and stole away to bed.
But, go, you torture me, and I would die
Not wrapped in loving thoughts but with a curse
Turning my soul to crimson at the end.

Gaoler

[*Going close to her and looking down at her*]

At Plymouth Bay? The cabin faced the sea?

Mother Malden

Aye! aye! But leave me, for my hour has
come!

Gaoler

[*Putting up a hand*]

Hush, for the sake of all you may have lost.
A light breaks on me, let it fall on you !
Your tale has roused my memory from sleep.
I wake at midnight and the forest sighs ;
An owl cries to an owl — and I am young.
And, hark, an answer comes from savage lips
And all the world grows mad with cruel cries.
There in the room my mother, white-faced,
stands,
While through the window pours the moonlight
pale,
And louder through the summer night is heard
The snarl of redskins, hungry for our blood.
But you have told the story of that night ;
Your wound, my capture, and the haunting pain
That duller grew as years passed into years.
And now I find you old, condemned to die,
And I — your son — your gaoler still must be.
Oh, mother, in the name of God, the woe of it !

Mother Malden

Her arms stretched upward

Peace, peace, my son! See how yon light of day
Breaks through the clouds that made the night
so black!

So comes the joy of this to my old heart.
So God forgives the awful curse I spoke.

[*A sound of approaching guards is heard outside the door.
The noise of many people around the gibbet comes
through the window. A rap is heard at the door.*]

Gaoler

[Calling aloud]

Anon! Be patient! I'll bring my captive soon.

Mother Malden

[*Taking the parchment from her bosom*]

You'll take the gold, then, from a witch's hands,
And know its spell is wrought by mother-love;
You'll toss the earth and find I've hidden there
My youth, my heart, and all my hopes for thee.
And when the world pays homage to your power,
And asks the secret of your sudden wealth,
You'll answer not but to your soul shall come
The vision of a woman glorified.

[*Impatient rap at door and clamor of crowd outside*]

Gaoler

[*Calling aloud*]

Peace, peace, one moment more! I come! I come!

[*Takes his mother by the hand and they fall on their knees together. Gaoler bows his head, while her face is raised to heaven.*]

Mother Malden

Oh God, I thank Thee for Thy tenderness
Who sinned against Thee with a stubborn heart,
And, dying, ask Thy pardon! Give Thee praise!
Now let Thy servant, purified, depart.

[*Curtain*]





